

Utilizing Readiness Tools to Support Student Success



FACT SHEET

Every teacher, principal, and school administrator wants their young students to thrive as they move through the transitional kindergarten and kindergarten years and into the early elementary grades. With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Local Control Funding Formula, school districts have new opportunities to strengthen support for young learners.

Developmentally appropriate kindergarten readiness observation and assessment is a foundational tool for these efforts.

Teachers can utilize readiness assessment information to:

- Better understand the knowledge and skills of their youngest students, and
- Ensure that strategies for instruction, intervention, and support are tailored to their learning and developmental needs.

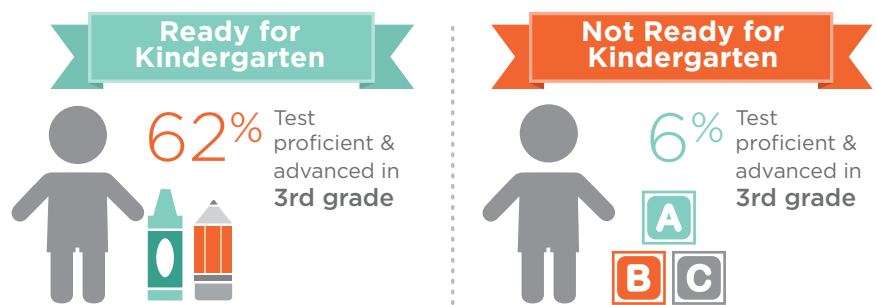
School districts, communities, and the state can plan and allocate resources better, guided by aggregated readiness data.

- Shared, comparable data can improve coordination between early learning and K-12 systems and communities, and can help link these systems.
- Data can demonstrate the impact of local investments in the earliest years and can monitor readiness trends over time.

Why Do We Need to Know if Children Are “Ready” for School?

School readiness should not just be measured by student proficiency on academic skills; rather, readiness is a multi-dimensional measure of a child’s competencies and skills upon entering transitional kindergarten or kindergarten. This holistic readiness information provides a comprehensive picture of young students’ strengths and areas for growth early in the school year, allowing transitional kindergarten and kindergarten teachers to be ready to support their students’ development.

When students’ strengths and areas for growth are identified and addressed early in their education, they are better prepared for future success. And when districts and communities broadly understand the readiness trends of students entering kindergarten, they can plan and allocate resources to ensure children are supported as early as possible.



Compares children that attended high quality pre-K vs. no pre-K

Readiness includes, but is not limited to:

- Social and emotional development,
- Cognition, and
- Language and literacy development.

Examples include:

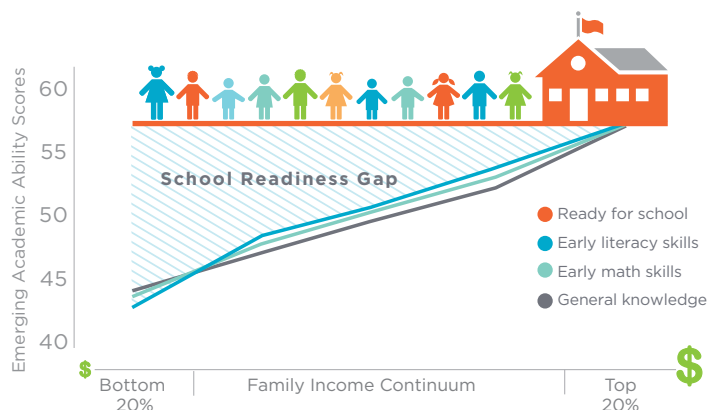
- Ability to navigate relationships with peers,
- Number sense, and
- Phonological awareness.

School readiness is the strongest predictor of a student's 3rd grade reading and math scores: well-prepared kindergarteners are 10 times more likely to meet the expectations of the California state standards by 3rd grade than those who are less prepared when they start school.¹

Benefits of Readiness Information for Students, Teachers, and Parents

- Knowledge of children's development among teachers.
- Better support of student learning through tailored instruction.
- Involving parents earlier in their children's learning by more easily sharing with them their children's developmental milestones and areas for growth.

An income-based achievement gap is evident as children begin kindergarten



Benefits of Readiness Information for School Districts and Communities

- Alignment of readiness tool and instruction with Common Core in early grades.
- Data to assist in resource allocation decisions within districts and counties.

California Moving Forward on a Statewide, Uniform Readiness Tool

Over half of the states (29) in the country collect kindergarten readiness information in a state-level data system, but unfortunately California is not one of them.² Currently, California allows school districts to choose whether and how to assess young children as they enter school, and – with no parameters in place – tremendous variability exists. However, the California Department of Education (CDE) recognizes the need for a valid and reliable observation and assessment tool that can be utilized uniformly throughout the state.

The DRDP-K: A Promising Assessment Tool for Statewide Use

In collaboration with the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies and the University of California, Berkeley Evaluation and Assessment Research (BEAR) Center, CDE developed an assessment instrument called the Desired Results Developmental Profile-Kindergarten (DRDP-K), which is:

- Developmentally appropriate,
- Aligned to both the Common Core and the Preschool Learning Foundations, and
- Free for all school districts that elect to use it.

In August 2014, after several years of validation research, the DRDP-K was released as an update to its predecessor, the DRDP-SR. With the DRDP-K, local education agencies have *greater flexibility to select which domains to assess that best align with their priorities*.

The DRDP-K (like the DRDP-SR before it) is also valid at both the individual and community level; as such, it is a promising tool that can assist teachers as they plan their instruction and can also aid communities and districts with the aggregated data it produces.

Several resources have been developed to support implementation.

Online teacher training modules, webinars, and how-to videos, as well as on-site trainings and technical support provided by WestEd, are available to support administrators and teachers in implementing the DRDP-K. For more information, please visit www.drdpk.org.

Achieving Statewide Readiness Assessment

The statewide use of a uniform, valid, and reliable readiness assessment tool that measures children's learning and development holistically also provides the state with a meaningful way to gauge the diverse and changing needs of its youngest learners. State leaders need this information to better inform early childhood and K-12 planning and resource allocation, as well as to assess the impact of early learning investments and school readiness trends over time.

There are promising readiness assessment tools that can be used for statewide purposes. However, successful statewide implementation of a readiness tool will require local- and state-level resources and support, as well as leadership, to build momentum among local educational leaders and other key stakeholders across the state. Therefore, policymakers must also play a role in moving California towards a universal, school readiness assessment system that provides uniform data on our state's youngest learners to support their future success by guiding smart and efficient policies at the state level and teaching practices in the classroom.

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1. "Understanding and Improving School Readiness in Silicon Valley," presentation, 2009, Applied Survey Research: <http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/storage/database/researchpresentations/readykidstoreadyschools/UnderstandingSRinSiliconValley-ASRpresentation2009.pdf>
2. 2013 State of the States Early Childhood Data Systems, The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, February 2014.